are, however, not being commissioned into close combat Arms in the Army. In the Air Force, women are being inducted in all combatant streams except fighter stream. In the Navy, there have been restrictions in employing women officers onboard ships and submarines. Women officers are treated at par with similarly placed male counterparts in terms of recruitment, training, tenure of service, promotion etc.

4. The issues of combat employability and grant of permanent commission are interlinked. A study carried out by the Services on the issue in 2006 recommended that women officers be excluded from induction in close combat Arms where chances of physical contact with enemy are high. The study concluded that it was essential to obtain feed back on their performance based on revised pre-commission training (from 24 weeks to 49 weeks), detailment on courses such as Junior Command Course and assessment of their performance as sub-unit commanders especially in field areas for holding higher ranks and grant of Permanent Commission.

5. The matter has been reviewed further and the Government has recently approved a proposal to grant Permanent Commission to women officers prospectively in select branches (Judge Advocate General (JAG) Department and Education Corps of the three Services, Accounts Branch in Air Force and Naval Constructor in Navy).

Welfare package of compensation

495. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a vast difference in the welfare package of compensation given to the next of kin of personnel killed/wounded in different operations to those killed in Kargil; and

(b) if so, the details of the difference and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Details are given in the enclosed statement.

Statement

Details of welfare package of compensation

Comparison of compensation package is as follows :-

(Rs. in Lacs)

S. No.	Description	OP Vijay (Kargil)	Other events/ Operations
1	2	3	4
	Fatal Cases:		
(a)	Ex-Gratia (Central Govt.) payable to next of kin	10.00	7.50
(b)	Dwelling Unit	5.00	Nil
(c)	Parental Assistance	2.00	Nil
(d)	Children's Education	2.00	Nil
	TOTAL	Rs. 19.00 Lacs	Rs. 7.50 Lacs

1	2	3	4
	Disability Cases:		
(a)	Ex-Gratia from National Defence Fund	3.00-6.00	Nil
(b)	Dwelling Unit	2.00	Nil
(c)	Children's Education	2.00	Nil
	TOTAL	Rs. 10 to 13 Lacs	

The compensation package for the martyrs and wounded after the Kargil (Operation Vijay) operations were evolved shortly after the event and specifically for the particular operation as it was one major war like event. The existing package at that time being without covering other aspects listed above, required the enhancement.

Opening of Siachen to tourists

496. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any plans for opening of 'Siachen' to tourists;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the influx of tourists to 'Siachen' will adversely affect the ongoing peace talks with the neighbouring countries;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the time by when Government proposes to open the area for tourists?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (e) The area mentioned in the question falls within the State of Jammu and Kashmir which is an integral part of India. Trekking expedition have been taking place in the area subject to appropriate clearance.

In September 2007, the Government of Pakistan protested against the trekking expeditions in the Siachen area expressing their deep concern over the media report in this regard and stating that Siachen issue is being discussed within the framework of the Composite Dialogue.

Suitable reply was given to Government of Pakistan clarifying that trekking expeditions have been taking place in the past and India does not see how these will have an adverse impact on the dialogue process.

CAG's Report on procurement of bullet proof vehicles

497. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Comptroller and Auditor General in its report (March, 2007) has pointed out that Ministry of Defence "procured 200 bullet proof vehicles, worth Rs. 31.64 crore in July, 2005 from a private firm which were reported defective by users";